

S. S.: OR, THE SINNER SAVED NO. 1961

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 1, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed.”
Romans 9:30-33.

FOR several Sabbath mornings I have sought the comfort and edification of God's people, although I trust I have not, even in such discourses, overlooked the unconverted. How can we forget them while they are in such peril? At the same time, the main drift of the service has been for the people of God, and it will not be wise to continue long in that line. We must not forget the lost sheep. It were better that we left the ninety-nine than that we neglected the Rambler.

We must, therefore, this morning seek to go after that which is gone astray until we find it. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit would make every word to be full of His power! He can fill each sentence with celestial dynamite, an irresistible energy, which will blast the rocks of self-righteousness, and make a way for the Gospel of the grace of God through the impenetrable barriers of sin. For that end I am anxious that, while I speak on God's behalf, the prayers of the faithful may bring down God's power, and make the feeble voice of man to be the vehicle for the omnipotence of God.

It is very necessary often to go over the elements—the foundation truths of the Gospel. Schools may rise to the classics, but they can never dispense with the spelling book. All over the country there must be the repetition of the alphabet, and words of one syllable, or there will be no scholarship. I feel that it is necessary to give line upon line, precept upon precept, as to the first principles of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Multitudes of persons are in bondage, and will continue to be so until they hear a very clear and simple description of the way of salvation. This is the key of their liberty.

You that know these first things must be willing often to hear them. Indeed, I find that you are the people that never grow tired of viewing that stone which God has laid in Zion for a foundation, for it never becomes a rock of offense to you. To you the repetitions of Jesus are more acceptable than the novelties of human invention. The system and method of salvation, therefore, will come before you again this morning. Oh, that to some it may seem to be heard for the first time, though they may with the outward ear have heard “the old, old story” a thousand times! Oh, that they may now understand it, grasp it, and find the blessing of it, and so rejoice in God their Savior!

Paul had two facts before him. The first was that wherever he went preaching Jesus Christ certain Gentiles believed the doctrine, and straightway became justified persons, receiving at once forgiveness of sin and a change of heart. He had been in Ephesus and Thessalonica, in Corinth and in Rome, and at his preaching of the Word of life the heathen who were outside of the pale of true religious profession had believed in the Lord Jesus, and so had attained to righteousness, and proved that they had done so by their righteous, pure, devout lives.

On the other hand, there was the sad fact that whereas he had usually commenced his ministry in the synagogues, and so had opened his commission by addressing the seed of Abraham, to whom belonged

the covenants of promise, yet they had almost everywhere rejected the Messiah, and refused the grace of the Gospel. At the same time, it was evident that they had missed the righteousness which they conceived they had obtained, for, as a nation, they were in bondage to superstitious prejudice, and were fallen low, both as to morality and spirituality, insomuch that they were correctly described by the prophet when he said, "Except the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom and been made like unto Gomorrah."

There were these two facts before the apostle's mind—the Gentiles, who had been far off, had attained to righteousness, and the Israelites, on the border of it, yet perished there, and did not attain to the law of righteousness. To this he calls our attention and I shall ask you to look, first of all, at *a wonder of grace*, "The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness." Secondly, I shall ask you to note *a marvel of folly*, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness." And when I have done that, I shall have to throw my whole strength into *a discourse of affectionate concern* about those of you who, as yet, have not attained unto the righteousness which is of faith.

Oh that you may see yourselves, and then see the Lord Jesus by the light of the Holy Spirit! Like the prodigal, may it be said of each one of you, "He came to himself," and then "he arose, and came to his Father."

I. First, I crave your earnest attention to A WONDER OF GRACE.

Certain men had attained to righteousness. They had, so to speak, "put their hand upon righteousness." They had grasped the righteousness of faith, which is the righteousness of God. They could say, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." These without boasting could declare that Jesus Christ was made of God unto them wisdom and righteousness. In them the righteousness of the law was fulfilled. They were at peace, for the fruit of righteousness is peace. They were grateful, earnest, devoted, zealous, and they yielded their members as instruments of righteousness unto God. The Lord had covered them with the righteousness of Christ, and had infused into them the righteousness of His indwelling Spirit.

Saintly men and saintly women were produced among those who once had used "curious arts" and enchantments, in those in whom sin abounded grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. There were people in the world whom God, the Judge of all, accepted as righteous. Now that alone is a great wonder, for we are all sinners both by nature and by practice, and it is as great a marvel as the making of a world, that anyone of our race should attain to righteousness.

Sit down, Christian man, and rejoice in the righteousness which you have received by faith, and you will be filled with amazement. The more you consider the righteousness which you have received in Christ Jesus by your faith in Him, the more you will cry out, "Oh the depths!" It is indeed a miracle of love that we, who by nature were under the curse, have now obtained the blessing of righteousness, as it is written, "For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

The wonder grows when we consider that *these persons who had attained to righteousness had come to it under great disadvantages*, for they were Gentiles. The Gentiles were considered by the Jews to be offcasts, and outcasts, aliens from the commonwealth of grace. They were given up to idolatry or to atheism, and lusts the most degrading were rife among them. They had gone very far from original righteousness. A true picture of the Gentile world in the days of Paul would have terribly dark colors in it. It would be injurious to morals to describe in public the details of the lives of the best of the heathen. If you speak of the manners of the common people, you must be prepared to hear of vices which crimson the cheek of modesty.

There are virtues for which the heathen had no name, and they practiced vices for which, thank God, you have no name. The Gentiles were filled with all unrighteousness, and therefore they were ignorant of the requirements of the law and of the holiness of God. The light which shone upon the seed of Israel had not yet dawned on them. There may have been here and there a chosen few, like Cornelius the

centurion, and others, who followed the light which is found in nature and in the human conscience, and so welcomed all that they learned from Israel, but taken in the bulk, John fitly described the Gentiles when he said, "The whole world lies in wickedness."

The strange thing is that such originally were those men who attained unto righteousness. The Gospel came into their streets, and at first they heard it with opposition, saying, "What will this babblers say?" Their attention was attracted, and they were willing to hear the preacher again concerning this matter. Conscience was awakened, and soon they began to inquire, "What must we do to be saved?" Having no righteousness of their own, and being convinced that they needed one, they fled at once to the righteousness which God has prepared in His dear Son for all who believe in Him, and multitudes believed and turned to God. Thus those who knew not the Lord became His obedient worshippers, and those who were far off were made nigh by faith.

Are there not persons here whose condition is somewhat similar to that of the Gentiles? You are not religious, you are not members of godly families, neither are you frequenters of our sanctuaries, but why should not you also attain to righteousness by faith? Wonders of grace are things which God delights in. Why should He not work such wonders in you? At any rate, while I preach I am exercising faith concerning you that you shall at once be brought to salvation and eternal life.

The marvel of grace in the case of these Gentiles was all the greater because, as the apostle says, "*They followed not after righteousness.*" They had originally felt no desire after righteousness before God. Some of them were thoughtful, just, and generous towards men, but righteousness and holiness towards God was not a matter after which they labored. The Gentile mind ran more upon, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink?" than upon "What is righteousness before God?"

Gold or glory, power or pleasure, were the objects for which they ran, but they ran no race for the prize of holiness. They were ignorant of such matters as salvation, reconciliation with God, the inward life, sanctification, and all the other mysteries and blessings of the covenant, and therefore they followed not after them. They were content, most of them, to live like the cattle that plowed their fields, or like the dogs that prowled through their streets. They followed the devices and desires of their own hearts.

Yet when the Gospel burst in upon the midnight of their souls they received its light with joy, and accepted the good news from heaven with much readiness of mind. They had not sought the Shepherd, but He had sought them, and laying them on His shoulders, He brought them to His fold. It was a wonderful thing that, though they did not follow after righteousness, yet they found it.

They are like that Indian who, passing up the mountain side pursuing game, grasped a shrub to prevent his slipping, and as its roots gave way they uncovered masses of pure silver, and thus the richest silver mine was discovered by a happy accident by one who looked not for it. These Gentiles discovered in Christ the righteousness which they needed, but which they had never dreamed of finding.

This reminds us of our Lord's own parable. The man was plowing with oxen, and on a sudden the plowshare struck upon an unusual obstacle. He stopped the plow and turned up the soil, and lo! He found a crock of gold! This "treasure hid in a field" at once won his heart, and for joy thereof he sold all that he had, and bought the field.

Grace finds men who otherwise would never have found grace. Oh, the glorious grace of God, which brings the righteousness of Christ full often to those who never sought it, to those who had no religiousness, nor even tendencies that way! Saul, the son of Kish, went to seek his father's asses, and found the kingdom, and even thus have careless and worldly persons been made to know the Lord when it seemed highly improbable that they would ever do so. This is a great wonder, for which all heaven rings with hallelujahs to God.

Observe that *these unlikely persons did really believe, and so attain to righteousness.* When the Gospel came to them they heard it with deep attention. There was a something about it which powerfully attracted them. You know who has said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." This divine charm drew them to consider the doctrine, and when they came to understand it, they perceived that it suited their need as a shoe fits a foot. It revealed their secret needs and wounds, but it also provided for

them, and so, having considered the thing, they accepted with joy the blessings brought to them in the Gospel.

They at once believed in the Lord Jesus. The thing was done suddenly, but it was well done. Their first hearing of the Gospel saved them. We read of one of them, that he had shut up the preacher in the prison, and had gone to bed, but in the middle of the night an earthquake shook the prison, and that night he not only became a believer, but he was baptized, and all his household.

These Gentiles did not want hammering at so long as some of you do. They did not require the preacher to rack his brains to find fresh illustrations and arguments, and then labor in vain year after year. At the first summons they surrendered. They no sooner saw the light than they rejoiced in it. They rose at a bound from depths of sin to heights of righteousness. Those who had been ringleaders in the service of the devil became zealots in the service of Jesus Christ. The change was as complete as it was startling—"they attained unto righteousness," they were accepted before God as righteous men.

The apostle asks us, "What shall we say, then?" We say this—*herein is seen the sovereign appointment of the Lord*. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will fulfill His promise to His Son, "Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew not you shall run unto you because of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel: for he has glorified you." Here I see the Almighty Lord of all speaking to the darkness, and saying, "Let there be light," and there is light. Here I see the Word of the Lord coming forth out of His mouth, and accomplishing the thing whereto He sent it. The voice of the Lord which breaks the cedars of Lebanon also breaks the hard hearts of men, "the voice of the LORD which makes the hinds to calve," creates new life in the minds of the ungodly. The Gospel is full of power, and it works according to the eternal purpose of God. The calling of the Gentiles in Paul's day is only one illustration of the frequent action of sovereign grace.

This also is according to divine prophecy. What said the Lord by His servant Hosea? "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." Thus spoke the prophet, and so it must be.

The Lord has many more such chosen ones to call forth from their death in sin. I expect as I stand here that God's infinite power is about to save certain of you. I do not know to whom this grace will be vouchsafed, but I know that the Word of the Lord will not return unto Him void. He may bless the least likely of you. He may call the man who now says, "I do not believe a word of it." Friend, you do not know what you will believe before this day is over. I trust that God's power is going forth to bring you within the bounds of salvation.

It may be that some persecuting Saul of Tarsus will at this hour cry, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" And on the other hand, it may be that some young man who lacks only one thing will this day find it. So God does work in the majesty of His power that persons who have not sought after righteousness nevertheless are led to faith in Christ, and by that faith they are immediately made righteous before God. This is what we have reason to expect, for many promises declare that it shall be so. Did not Isaiah boldly say, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me"?

This is, in fact, the Gospel of the grace of God. That God smiles upon worthy people and rewards their goodness is not the Gospel. The Gospel is that God has mercy upon the guilty and undeserving. The Gospel gives us this "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is not the Gospel that you will be saved who do your best, and will, therefore, have some claim upon mercy. No, no! By such statements you sail upon quite another tack. The Gospel declares to you that though you have done your worst, the Lord will yet have mercy upon you if you believe in the atonement of His dear Son.

If you were turned upside down and shaken for a week, not even a dust of goodness would fall from some of you, and yet even you shall be made the children of God if you believe in Christ Jesus. Repent

and be converted. Believe in Jesus and live. That the guiltiest may yet attain to righteousness, this is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which it is my delight to preach.

Behold, I set before you an open door of grace, and beseech you to enter in just as you are. We come not to mend the garments of those of you who are clothed already, but to present the naked with the robe of Christ's righteousness. We come not hither to search for your beauties, but to unveil your deformities, your wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, and then to point you to the Lord Jesus, who can heal you, and cause the beauty of the Lord to rest upon you. We preach not merit, but mercy—not human goodness, but divine grace—not works of law, but wonders of love. This is the Gospel of which the salvation of the Gentiles was a blessed result.

II. We see, in the second place, A MARVEL OF FOLLY, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness."

Multitudes have never yet found true righteousness. I fear that many, of my present congregation are in the number. They are not righteous, though, perhaps, they trust in themselves that they are so. Their consciences are not at ease. They are conscious of serious shortcomings. They have not yet found a safe anchorage. I commend to their study the case of Israel.

In Paul's day *these people were, first of all, very advantageously placed.* They were of the chosen race of Israel. They had been born, as it were, within the visible church, and circumcised, and brought up to know the law of Moses, and yet they had never attained to righteousness. Like Gideon's fleece, they were dry while the floor around was wet. There are those present who were nursed in the lap of piety—from their babyhood they heard the name of Jesus. They have scarcely been a single Sabbath-day absent from the courts of the Lord's house. They went from the Sunday school to the Bible class, and it was hoped that they would go from there to the church, but it has not proved so.

Now that they have reached riper years they are still hovering around the gates of mercy, but they have not entered upon the way of life. My hearer, I am frightened for you, and such as you. I tremble for you who are so good, so religious, so zealous, and yet are not regenerate. You are the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child of grace. You look somewhat like a Christian, but as you are not converted, and have never become as a little child, you have not entered the kingdom of heaven. It is a misery of miseries that you should stand on such a vantage ground, as many of you do, and yet be lost. Shall it be so? Turn you, turn you, why will you die?

It was not merely that they had many advantages, but *these Israelites were earnest and zealous in following after the law of righteousness.* Alas! Many who have never forgotten a single outward rite or ceremony of the church, and are evermore zealous for taking the sacrament and regular attendance at their place of worship, are nevertheless quite dead as to spiritual things. Some even kneel down every morning and night and repeat a prayer. They pay everybody their own, they are always kind to their neighbors, and they do not refuse their help to the subscription list, and yet they are quite out of the running.

Some of you know that it is so. You dare not die as you are, in fact, you can hardly go on living as you now feel. Nobody could put a finger upon an open fault in you, and yet you are like a rosy apple which is rotten at the core. You know it is so—at least, you have a shrewd suspicion that all is not right between you and God. You have no peace, no joy, and when you hear others rejoicing in the Lord, you either think they are presumptuous, or else you envy them, as well you may.

Thousands of people in England are perishing in the light, even as the heathen perish in the dark. Many are wrapping themselves up in their own righteousness, and are as sure to be lost as if the nakedness of their sin could be seen of all men. I pray you; take heed to yourselves, you that follow after the law of righteousness. It is concerning such as you that the apostle Paul had great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart. Remember, you may be in the visible church, and yet may be strangers to the grace of God. You may be earnestly seeking righteousness in the wrong way, and this is a terrible thing.

Notice that these people made a mistake at the very beginning. It may not seem a great one, but it was so in reality. *Israel did not follow after righteousness, but after "the law of righteousness."* They

missed the spirit, which is righteousness, and followed after the mere letter of the law. To be really righteous was not their aim, but to do righteousness was their utmost notion. They looked at “You shall not kill,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy,” and so forth, but to love God with all their heart was not thought of, and yet this is the essence of righteousness.

They looked at the letter of the law, and were careful to pay tithe upon mint and anise, and to attend to all sorts of small points and niceties, but to cleanse the heart and purify the motive did not occur to them. They thought of what a man *does*, but they forgot the importance of what a man *is*. Love to God, and likeness to God, were forgotten in a servile attempt to observe the letter of the law.

So we see everywhere, people nowadays consider what kind of dress a clergyman ought to wear on a certain day, and which position he should occupy at the communion, and what should be the decoration of the place of worship, and what should be the proper music for the hymn, and so forth, but to what purpose is all this? To be right in heart with God, to trust in His dear Son, and to be renewed in His image, is better than all rituals.

Among us there are certain people who are nothing if they are not orthodox. They make a man an offender for a word, and are never as happy as when they are up to their necks in controversy. In each case the external and the letter are preferred to the inward and the spiritual. O my dear hearers, escape from this error. Be not so eager for the shell, as to lose the kernel—so zealous for the form of godliness, as to deny the power thereof!

What was the reason why these zealous Israelites did not attain to righteousness? *They went upon a wrong principle*. The principle of these Israelites was that of works. They said within themselves, “We must keep the law, and in that way we shall be saved.” In this way no man was ever saved, nor ever will be. Harken diligently to what I now say. The principle of salvation by our own works *exalts man*, and you may be sure that it must be an error for that reason. On that principle you are your own Savior. Everything hinges upon what *you* do and what *you* feel and Jesus Christ is nowhere. If you were to get to heaven by this road, you would sing to your own praise and glory. This system puffs you up, and makes you feel what an important person you are to deserve so well of God. It smells of that pride which the Lord abhors.

While it thus lifts man up, *it altogether ignores the great fact that you have sinned already*. Are you going to be saved by your works? What about the past? If I am going to pay my way for the future, this will not discharge my old debts. What have you to say for your former sins and follies? Do you imagine that you can make up for wasted years by using the rest of life as you ought to do? If you do your best in the future you will do no more than you are bound to do. This will not remove your old sins. Why, man, if you could start afresh as a new-born babe, and keep God’s law perfectly throughout all time, yet the faults of the past would remain like blots indelible. Sin is sin, and God will punish it, and all your future obedience can be no atonement for it.

Note again, that this principle of salvation by works, while it makes much of man, *makes nothing of God*. It shuts out both His justice and His mercy. Do you really know what you are? You think you are somebody, and can merit something of God, but this is a delusion. I will tell you where you are. You are already convicted of rebellion, you are “condemned already.” Nothing that you can do can reverse that condemnation which is already passed upon you, and your only hope lies in the royal prerogative of God, who can grant a free pardon if He pleases to do so. You can never deserve pardon. It must be an act of pure grace. Nothing but the long-suffering of God at this moment keeps you out of hell.

Yes, I mean you who think so much of yourselves. I mean you who set yourselves down among the naturally good. I would fain strip you of your finery, and throw away the false jewelry with which you have decorated yourselves, for a self-righteous man’s religion is nothing but a painted pageantry to go to hell in. Oh, how I loathe to see the plumes and feathers of self-confidence, which are an awful mockery, the lying ensigns of a false hope, flaunted by a soul that is on its way to sure damnation! O presuming souls, may God in His mercy make you see where you are! Let your cry be, “God be merciful to me a

sinner.” Until you have taken the sinner’s place, you are in a false position, and God will treat you as one of those liars who shall not tarry in His sight.

Moreover, dear friends, the system of salvation by works *is impossible to you*. You cannot perfectly keep the law of God, for you are sold under sin. I recollect when I resolved never to sin again. I sinned before I had finished my breakfast. It was all up for that day, so I thought I would begin the next day, and I did, but my failure was repeated. Who can get clean water from a polluted spring? You will never keep the commandment without spot—it is so pure, and you are so impure—it is so spiritual, and you are so earthly. “There is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not.”

But suppose you could outwardly keep the law of God out of a sense of obligation to do so, yet the work is not done unless you yourself are made right with God. Your heart must love God, as well as your hands serve Him. If you only obey Him from fear of hell and hope of heaven, what are you? Nothing but a mere hireling. This is not the filial nature of a child, whose service is all for love. As for myself, I serve God this day with my whole heart, but it is not from fear of hell. My sins are forgiven me, and there is no hell for me. Neither do I serve the Lord because I hope for heaven thereby, but because I love Him who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

There is evidence of righteousness in this, but no claim of any. Mere obedience to the Lord, if there were no heart in it, would be a poor affair. We have many servants who regard their work as drudgery, and though they do their duties, they do them with no regard for our interests, but the old-fashioned servants were of another kind. If you have any such, you will prize one of such above a thousand others. They love their master, and they identify themselves with his interests.

Old John did not want orders, he was a law to himself, he served from love. When his master one day spoke about their parting, he wanted to know where his master was going, for he had no idea of going himself. He was part and parcel of the household, and was worth his weight in diamonds. You may well say, “I would give my eyes to get such a servant as that.” I dare say you would.

Our Lord Jesus gave Himself that He might make such servants out of us. Mere work-mongering will never do this. It still leaves the man a self-seeker, a slave working under fear of the lash, with no delight either in his master or in his work. O my hearers, “you must be born again,” or you cannot attain to righteousness, and there is no being born again on the principle of the works of the law—that must be a gift of grace, and it can only be given into that hand of faith which receives Christ Jesus the Lord.

Once more, *the full development of the unrighteousness of these zealous Israelites came when they stumbled at Christ*. “They stumbled at that stumbling stone.” Jesus Christ came among them, and became to them a rock of offense. They seemed to stand upright until then, but when He came among them, down they went into actual rebellion against the Lord and His Anointed. Yes, your moralists are the great enemies of the cross. They do not want atonement—they can hardly endure the doctrine, “Washed in the blood!” They cannot bear the sound of the word. They need no washing. They have kept the law, and what do they lack?

Jesus came to proclaim salvation by grace, but these men spurn the idea of grace. When Jesus told them of a certain creditor who frankly forgave those debtors who had nothing to pay, such parables were worthless to them, for they were not in debt to God, but quite the reverse. The reception of returning prodigals might make a pretty picture, but it had no relation to themselves. They were not sinners like the publican, and they did not need to be taught, like the Samaritan woman, to look to Jesus for the living water. “He that believes on me has everlasting life” was not doctrine that they cared to hear.

They could see, and needed not to have their eyes opened. They were free-born, and were never in bondage to any man. In fact, they were the whole who had no need of a physician. They regarded the mission of Christ as an insult to their virtues, and therefore they crucified Him. Self-righteousness is the enemy of the cross. It does despite to the blood of Jesus. It sets itself up in rivalry with the divine sacrifice, and hence it rejects the Gospel, and rails at imputed righteousness. “They followed after the law of righteousness,” but Christ, who was righteousness itself, they would have nothing to do with, for their proud self-conceit thought itself above all need of Him.

III. In the last place, I am to come to close-handed fighting. I must deliver A DISCOURSE OF AFFECTION.

As I love you, I would have you saved at once. It is the first of May. Londoners in the olden time used to go into the country on the first of May to wash their faces in the dew. Oh, that God would make His heavenly dew to wash your hearts this May morning! Oh, that you may enjoy the perfume of the Plant of renown at this hour! Some Gentiles have attained to righteousness by faith, why should not you? Believe in Jesus, and His righteousness is yours—to you God imputes righteousness without works (Rom 4:6).

Why do you not trust my Lord, my bleeding Lord, my risen Lord, my interceding Lord? There is no conceivable reason for doubting Him. Come and rely upon Him, and righteousness is yours. Did I hear you say, “But—”? Away with your buts—others have been just where you now are, and they have believed in Jesus, and have attained to righteousness, and why should not you? Try it. Believe, I pray you, and God’s righteousness is yours.

Why should you not believe? Do I hear you say, “I cannot feel”? Did I say anything about feeling? Salvation by feelings is only another form of salvation by works, and it is not to be thought of. Salvation is by Jesus Christ, and it is received by faith alone. It is bestowed as a free gift, and it must be received as a free gift, or not at all. Trust Jesus to save you, and you are saved. Believe Him, and be happy. Take to yourself what is freely presented to you in the Gospel. If you can believe, you are saved.

I cannot help quoting my brother Hill’s expression the other day, “He that believes on me hath everlasting life” (Joh 6:47). You know how he put it, “H.A.T.H. spells *got it*.” So it does, it is a curious but a perfectly correct way of spelling it. If you take Christ to yourself, He will never be taken from you. Breathe the air, and the air is yours. Receive Christ, and Christ is yours, and you have attained to righteousness.

Next, see why it is that you have failed hitherto to find rest. You have been earnest and sincere for a great many years, and you have kept on hearing and reading, and after a fashion, you have even kept on praying, but all the while you have been on the wrong road. Suppose yonder young man should start with his bicycle to go to Brighton, and he should travel due north. He will never get there. The faster he travels the further he will go from the place. If you follow after righteousness by the works of the law, the more you do the further off you will be from the righteousness of God. It must be so. Hear a parable.

Yonder is a river, deep and broad. You imagine that the proper way to cross it is to wade or swim through it. You will not hear of any other way. The king has built a bridge. It is open free and without toll. The passage is as safe as it is plain. You refuse to be beholden to His Majesty. You mean to get across by your own exertions. Already you are wet and cold, but you mean to persevere. You are nearly up to your neck in the stream, and the current is too strong for you. Come back, O foolish man, come back, and cross the river by the bridge.

The way of faith is so safe, so simple, so blessed, do try it! Have you not had enough of self-saving? After years of struggling you are no forwarder, and have no more comfort. Quit the struggle, and rest in the Lord Jesus. Give up your self-confiding folly, and confide in the Son of God, the bleeding Substitute for guilty men. May the blessed Spirit sweetly help you now to receive Jesus!

Do you not see, my friend, that in all your selfish trusting you are really fighting against your God? Jesus says, “Trust me, I will save you,” and you reply, “I prefer my own doings.” Is not that a great insult to Jesus? Have you not attacked the great Father upon a tender point? May He not appoint His own way of saving you? He has chosen the way of grace through faith. What arrogance to refuse that way! God gives without money and without price, why do you provoke Him with your fancied merits? You are flying in the face of the great God, and therefore your very religion is a sin.

Let me justify so strong a charge. Your very good works are evil works, because you are doing them to set aside the gift of God by Jesus Christ. The Lord appoints Jesus to be your righteousness, and you laboriously endeavor to manufacture a righteousness of your own. You reject the sacrifice of Calvary in

which you are bidden to trust, and you virtually say that for you it is a needless thing, for you can reach heaven by your own doings and feelings.

O sirs, if you could be saved by your own works, and your proud hopes could be fulfilled, then the death of our Lord would be proved to be a gross mistake. What need of the great sacrifice if you can save yourself? The cross is a superfluity if human merit can suffice. There was no need for the Father to put His Son to grief if, after all, men can work out a righteousness of their own. If works can save you, why did Jesus die? Do you see what you are driving at? Do you mean to trample under foot the blood of Jesus? I beseech you, abhor all notion of self-justification. Dash down the idol which would rival your Lord.

*“Cast your deadly ‘doing’ down,
Down, at Jesus’ feet;
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete!”*

“Well,” says one, “you seem to know the ins and outs of a soul aiming at self-salvation.” I do, for I long labored to climb up to heaven upon the treadmill of my own works. At length I grew weary, and gave myself up to Jesus, that He might bear me there in His own arms. Will you not do the same?

Now, my hearer, it will be an awful thing for you to understand this way of grace, and yet to neglect it. How long am I to preach to some of you? How long am I to wear my heart out in crying, “Come to Jesus. Believe in Jesus”? If anybody had said twenty years ago that yonder seat-holder would still remain an unconverted man he would have replied, “Impossible. I am near to the kingdom. I am almost persuaded, and before long I shall decide.” Yes, you are persuaded on Sundays, but you forget it all on Mondays and all because faith is not exercised. You believe in faith, but you do not believe in Jesus. You know that Jesus could save you if you trusted Him, but you do not trust Him. Oh that this moment you would end this delay!

To trust in Jesus is described in Scripture as looking. As the man bitten by the serpent looked to the serpent of brass hung high upon the pole, and as he looked healing and life came to him, so if you look to Jesus now you will be saved. I see God’s only-begotten Son, who has deigned to become man for our sakes, and to die in our room and place, and from the cross I entreat Him to speak to you. Speak, O my Master! He does speak, and these are His words—“Look unto me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Look, I pray you! Look and live!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 9

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 554, 552

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.